**Person 1:** I teach in a k-5 school where 98% of the students are on free and reduced lunch. African American students make up over 50% of the population followed by Hispanic being the second most prevalent race. According to research from our country’s report card these two cultures are repeatedly below grade level in reading. Looking at my personal class 88% of my 5th grade students are not meeting the fluency benchmark. My students are not engaged during reading. They would rather draw, or go to the restroom, or listen to music then they would read a book. Not all of them, obviously, but some of them dread reading. Even my students that are on grade level or above it consistently pick up easy books that do not present a challenge to them. I’m not sure why my students do this? Do they not have access to the amazing books that we read in elementary school (nope they are in my class library). Is reading too hard? Do they need help reading them? Do they not have a love and appreciation for reading? How do I build that and foster that? How can I help them to become lifelong readers?

**Person 2:** I think the first step to creating lifelong readers is to get the students to enjoy reading. I know when I was a kid I would love for my parents to read to me. It was a one on one time with them. I can assume that your students don’t have the most stable home life so the first step for you might be getting them to enjoy reading. There are several cites on-line where students could be read to. This is something they might take on in the younger grades so they can start to enjoy story time. For example, when I was a kid I loved going to the library on story time day. I’m not sure if your students would have had access to that? They could have a similar experience on-line. For the older students ebooks often have access to blogs where they could talk about the book with other people their age and learn to be in a community of readers. What gets me excited about a book is the ability to share it and talk about it with my friends. Ebooks would give students that chance.

**Person 1:** Okay, that sounds great but the books my students in 5th grade would like to read are way to challenging for them. One student in particular is reading on a 1st grade level. Just giving them access to these books isn’t going to help if they can’t read the words. I don’t have time in my day to read these hard books with them because I’m spending my time teaching them how to decode a text.

**Person 2:** Some eBooks­ offer you a solution to that too. EBooks offer a variety of features that will help the students in reading. Some eBooks’ have a function where it will read the text to the student. Others will allow them to click on a word and it will pronounce just that word. It also will let the students automatically get a definition for a word the students don’t know. There are lots of other features available as well.

**Person 1:** But aren’t some of these features distracting to a student. Doesn’t it take away from the experience of reading? Isn’t it more like a movie then a book?

**Person 2:** As with anything there are good examples and bad examples. Don’t just tell your kids to go online and find an e-book they want to read. Be choosey, like you would if you were picking out books for your library. Pick resources that are good to expose your kids to them. Scholastic will not put anything on their ebook resource that is more than 75% animation. They have said after that it is not a book anymore.

**Person 1:** Wow, those are all great things. It seems like ebooks could be a great solution. Now I just need to figure out how to make my students lifelong readers.

**Person 2:** Well again, just like anything it is how you use the resource. You are going to have to find a way to get the students excited about reading and engaged in the text. One way I would suggest doing this is incorporate a technology piece. If the students are using ebooks then they have access to technological tools. Use those in addition to ebooks to engage them and hold them accountable for reading. For example, students could be put into reading groups through edmodo and then have a discussion about the book they are reading. I believe storia also has an application in their reading program that is similar to this. You could also let the students create an e-portfolio about the books they have read. After each book they could create something in response to what they read. It could be a drawing, video, song, dance, any type of artifact that would help them to reflect upon what they have read, make connections with it, and then share it with the class.

**Person 1:** These are all great ideas. It sounds like ebooks have a lot to offer but just like any resource you need to be cautious with using it. Also, they certainly do not need to replace regular books but can simply be in addition to. It seems like schools are heading in the digital direction and embracing eBooks will be a step towards the right direction. I don’t think the ebooks are the solution to everything but overall I think it is a great option and should be available for students and teachers to use. I know after this conversation I plan on writing a grant to get a subscription to one of the ebook site.